COLLECTORS CORNER NO. 89 JULY 2, 1976
PAUL FRANCUCH

"CHURCH KEYS" -- OF ALL THINGS
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW, COLLECTOR'S CORNER, THE VOICE OF AMERICA SERIES OF PROGRAMS FOR LISTENERS WHO COLLECT THINGS, WHETHER THEY BE STAMPS OR COINS, SNUFF BOTTLES OR OLD AUTOS, OR EVEN BALLS OF STRING. HERE'S THIS WEEK'S REPORT, PREPARED BY PAUL FRANCUCH:

VOICE: EVERY SO OFTEN IN THIS VOA SERIES ON AMERICAN COLLECTORS, WE RUN ACROSS SOMEONE WHOSE ACCUMULATION OF ARTIFACTS IS, TO SAY THE LEAST, OUT OF THE ORDINARY. OR AT LEAST WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANY ESTABLISHED ORGANIZATION OR BODY OF PERSONS THAT SHARES THE JOYS OF THIS PERSON WHO FINDS TREASURE IN WHAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD CONSIDER TRINKETS.

SUCH IS THE CASE WITH THE COMMON BEVERAGE BOTTLE AND CAN OPENER. OR SHOULD WE SAY, THE NOT-SO-COMMON OPENER? -- OFTEN REFERRED TO IRREVERENTLY AS "CHURCH KEYS" PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY OPENED MILLIONS OF BEER CANS IN THEIR DAY. THESE ARE SMALL, METAL GADGETS WITH A CURVED OPENER ON ONE END FOR BOTTLES AND A HOOKED OPENER ON THE OTHER FOR CANS.

PERHAPS THE LARGEST COLLECTION OF SO-CALLED CHURCH KEYS IN EXISTENCE BELONGS TO CAL RASOR. HE LIVES IN THE CENTRAL ILLINOIS TOWN OF DECATUR. HE'S EIGHTY-SEVEN YEARS OLD AND A LITTLE HARD OF HEARING, SO WE TALKED TO HIS OLD FAMILY FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR, WILLIAM DEATTY -- WHO NOW, INCIDENTALLY, IS WATCHING OVER THE COLLECTION:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BEATTY

"HE JUST WANTED TO GET RID OF IT. HE HAD TO SELL HIS PLACE AND MOVE INTO AN APARTMENT IN A HOTEL, AND HE HAD NO PLACE TO STORE IT. SO HE ASKED ME IF I'D TAKE IT AND TAKE CARE OF IT, AND DO WITH IT WHAT I PLEASE."

VOICE: THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO COLLECT BOTTLES AND CANS. BUT THE OPENERS? WHY DID MISTER RASOR WANT TO COLLECT THEM:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- BEATTY

"I GUESS HE JUST GOT STARTED ACCIDENTALLY. HE STARTED CLEANING UP HIS DESK ONE DAY AND FOUND TWO OR THREE CAN OPENERS -- OR BOTTLE OPENERS -- IN THE DESK DRAWER. SO HE TOOK THEM OUT AND LOOKED AT THEM A LITTLE WHILE AND SAID, 'I BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE A GOOD THING TO COLLECT.'"

VOICE: AND A SUPERB COLLECTION IT IS: ONE-THOUSAND-TWO-HUNDRED SPECIES OF AN ITEM WHICH, FOR DECADES, FAITHFULLY UNLOCKED BEER AND SODA POP BOTTLES AND CANS WITH THIRST-QUENCHING EASE. BUT THE OPENERS -- HAVE NOW BECOME OBSOLESCENT WITH THE ADVENT OF SCREWABLE BOTTLE CAPS AND RINGED BEVERAGE CAN SLOTS THAT ARE REMOVED WITH THE PULL OF A FINGER.

MISTER RASOR'S DENSELY-MOUNTED COLLECTION IS SPREAD ACROSS SEVEN BOARDS OF WOOD. HE STARTED COLLECTING TEN YEARS AGO, AND HIS FRIEND MISTER BEATTY TELLS US THE OPENERS HAVE COME FROM FAR AND WIDE:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- BEATTY

"HE HAS OPENERS FROM FORTY-FOUR FOREIGN COUNTRIES. THE BIGGEST PART OF THE COLLECTION, I SUPPOSE, IS FROM THE U.S.A., AND A LOT OF THEM ARE FROM CANADA. HE HAD A LOT OF FRIENDS, AND EVERYBODY WHO TOOK A TRIP ABROAD LOOKED EVERYPLACE THEY WENT FOR BOTTLE OPENERS AND BROUGHT THEM BACK AND GAVE THEM TO HIM. HE NEVER BROUGHT ANY OF THEM. THEY'RE ALL GIFTS."

VOICE: MOST OF CAL RASOR'S COLLECTION CONSISTS OF STANDARD OPENERS DISTRIBUTED FOR MANY YEARS BY DIFFERENT BEVERAGE COMPANIES,

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VOICE: (CONT) COMPLETE WITH THE COMPANY'S NAME STAMPED UPON THEM.

IN FACT, MORE THAN HALF THE COMPANIES WHOSE OPENERS HAVE FOUND IMMORTALITY IN THE RASOR COLLECTION ARE NOW OUT OF BUSINESS.

THERE'S NOTHING VERY UNUSUAL ABOUT THE APPEARANCE OF MOST OF THE OPENERS, SAYS WILLIAM BEATTY. BUT ...

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- BEATTY

"ONE OF THEM LOOKS LIKE A BILLY-CLUB (CUDGEL). IT'S ABOUT TWO FEET LONG (.61 METER). AND ONE OF THEM LOOKS LIKE TWO BOLTS SCREWED TOGETHER, BUT WHEN YOU OPEN IT UP, IT'S A BOTTLE OPENER ON ONE END AND A CORK SCREW ON THE OTHER. THERE ARE SOME VERY ODD LOOKING THINGS IN THE COLLECTION."

VOICE: OH, AND BY THE WAY -- IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR A BOTTLE AND CAN OPENER COLLECTION, MISTER RASOR'S IS FOR SALE. IT COSTS TWELVE HUNDRED DOLLARS -- F.O.B. DECATUR, ILLINOIS.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO COLLECTOR'S CORNER, THE WEEKLY VOICE OF AMERICA PROGRAM FOR VOA LISTENERS WHO COLLECT THINGS ... FROM STAMPS AND COINS ... TO BOTTLE AND BEVERAGE CAN OPENERS. JOIN US AGAIN FOR ANOTHER...COLLECTOR'S CORNER.

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